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REMARKS

In the Final Office Action dated November 5, 2003, Examiner Patel objected to and rejected pending claims 16-29 on various grounds. The Applicant responds to each objection and rejection as subsequently recited herein, and respectfully requests reconsideration and further examination of the present application under 37 CFR § 1.112:

- A. Examiner Patel rejected pending claims 18-20 and 26-29 under 35 U.S.C. §112, ¶1 as failing to comply with the enablement requirement

The Applicant respectfully traverses this 35 U.S.C. §112, ¶1 of claims 18-20 and 26-29, because the specification clearly provides a description of the present invention in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected to make and/or use the present invention. Specifically, the Applicant (1) provides an enabling description of the path-tracking method illustrated in FIG. 1, (2) provides an enabling description of an exemplary front propagation of points as illustrated in FIGS. 2A-2C, (3) provides an enabling description an exemplary weighted curve as illustrated in FIG. 3, (4) provides an enabling description of an exemplary determination of a curvature of a path as illustrated in FIGS. 4A and 4B, and (5) provides an enabling description of an exemplary apparatus as illustrated in FIG. 5 for executing the path-tracking method illustrated in FIG. 1.

Nonetheless, the Applicant has amended claims 18-20 and 26-29 to delete any recitations of the terms "Filiation Front Marching technique", "local events", and "global events". Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 18-20 and 26-29 under 35 U.S.C. §112, ¶1 is therefore respectfully requested.

- B. Examiner Patel rejected pending claims 21-23 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. §112, ¶2 as being incomplete for omitting essential elements

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The Applicant has amended claims 21 and 22 to include all essential elements for claims 21-23 and 27. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 21-23 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. §112, ¶2 is therefore respectfully requested.

- C. Examiner Patel objected to pending claims 24 and 25 under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) as being in improper form

The Applicant has amended claim 24 to properly depend from dependent claim 23. Withdrawal of the objection of claims 24 and 25 under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) is therefore respectfully requested.

- D. Examiner Patel rejected pending claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) over a publication entitled "A fast marching level set method for monotonically advancing fronts" to *Sethian* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,067,166 to *Ito*

The Applicant has thoroughly considered Examiner Patel's remarks concerning the patentability of independent claim 16 over *Sethian* in view of *Ito*. The Applicant has also thoroughly read *Sethian* in view of *Ito*. The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection of claim 16, because *Sethian* teaches away from the combination of *Sethian* and *Ito* as proposed by Examiner Patel by teaching away from "back propagating the front along a first track starting at the end point through the children and the fathers of the first track until the start point is reached whereby the points of the path following the threadlike structure in the image are extracted" as recited in independent claim 16.

Specifically, *Sethian* teaches a back propagating from the end point to the start point by the steepest gradient descent in a convex surface. This back propagation as taught by *Sethian* purposely excludes the children and the fathers denoted during the front propagation. Thus, any modification of the back propagation of *Sethian* to include the children and the fathers denoted during the front propagation would improperly alter the principle operation of *Sethian*.

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Withdrawal of the rejection of independent claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)
over *Sethian* in view of *Ito* is therefore respectfully requested.

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SUMMARY

The Applicant respectfully submits that claims 16-29 as listed herein fully satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103 and 112. In view of the foregoing, favorable consideration and early passage to issue of the present application is respectfully requested. If any points remain in issue that may best be resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, Examiner Patel is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Dated: February 5, 2004

Respectfully submitted,
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